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Chair: Mr. Haniff ..... (Malaysia)
later: Mr. Zelioli (Vice-Chair) ..... (Italy)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 28: Advancement of women (*continued*)

(a) Advancement of women (A/66/38, A/66/99, A/66/181, A/66/212 and A/66/215) (*continued*)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/66/211) (*continued*)

1. **Ms. Kondolo** (Zambia) said that gender equality was a priority in her Government's long-term development plan. Gender-responsive legislation, socio-economic empowerment of women and gender mainstreaming were all integral components of State actions aimed at development. Her Government was incorporating the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women into domestic law. In addition, recent legislation on gender-based violence provided for criminalization of the act and protection of survivors, and established the State's responsibility for providing shelters for survivors. Several Government mechanisms made financial support available to women entrepreneurs and measures were in place to help rural women access education and land ownership. Nevertheless, the majority of women in Zambia, though active in the informal economy, were in need of economic opportunities.

2. Gender mainstreaming had been implemented within Government ministries and was required at all levels of the public sector. While recognizing that Governments were primarily responsible for the achievement of gender equality, her delegation urged the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) to become a strong presence and provide technical and financial assistance to Member States.

3. **Mr. Fiallo** (Ecuador) said that the Ecuadorian Constitution provided the legal basis for the protection of women's rights and set out the framework for achieving gender equality through gender mainstreaming and by enabling access to education and health care. It also provided for priority actions to guarantee the rights of persons who were vulnerable on multiple grounds, such as indigenous girls. A national council on gender equality worked to eliminate discrimination against women, promote parity as the basis for political participation and protect women against violence.

4. The Government had been working to provide de jure and de facto recognition of different types of families, with equal rights and opportunities. It also gave unpaid domestic workers access to social security and was promoting shared responsibility of men and women for family obligations. The interests and needs of women, including indigenous, mixed-race and Afro-descendent women, had been integrated into the State national plan and a gender perspective had been applied to national budgets. The Government also promoted the equitable representation of women in public office and leadership positions in the public sector.

5. His delegation commended the work of the Executive Director of UN-Women and welcomed the Entity's work to ensure the participation of Ecuador's indigenous women in the conservation and sustainable management of the Yasuní Biosphere Reserve. His Government was committed to integrating a gender perspective into macroeconomic policies in order to support women's full participation in the fields of education, science and technology.

6. **Mr. Gaspar Martins** (Angola) said that his Government had been focused on providing women with equal access to higher education, with incentives to pursue studies in the areas of science and technology. Women in Angola already had a strong presence in many professions traditionally dominated by men, including telecommunications, aviation, the military and law enforcement. His Government had submitted several reports on its implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and was striving to implement the resulting recommendations. Eradication of gender-based violence was a major priority in the national gender agenda, evidenced by the approval by the Parliament of a new law on domestic violence earlier that year. Skills training for rural women included a special focus on women with disabilities and single mothers.

7. His delegation welcomed the UN-Women strategic plan for 2011-2013, which was ambitious in scope owing to the Entity's consultations with stakeholders from various regions. His Government would be fully integrating the strategic plan into its national agenda on women's empowerment and strive to achieve its full implementation.

8. **Mr. Lindal** (Observer for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta) said that the Order of Malta focused on helping rural women, who had limited access to economic resources, were excluded from decision-making processes and performed a disproportionate share of unpaid work. Investing in that group had a multiplier effect on the productivity and economic growth of a community. Projects in the rural mountain region of Bolivia were helping families to improve their crop cultivation methods and sponsoring the education of young women, while a project in Viet Nam was providing women in an agricultural district with the skills to establish small businesses. Another project sought to improve the exercise of social and cultural rights among Afghan women by broadcasting educational television programmes on health, rights and other topics, featuring women presenters. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Order operated health centres that provided psychosocial assistance to women and girls who had suffered sexual violence during conflict. He drew attention to the plight of vulnerable migrant women and called on Member States to enhance law enforcement, protection and support of victims, and information sharing in order to eliminate discrimination against that group.

9. **Mr. Young** (Observer for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) said that ICRC welcomed States' recent efforts to promote the well-being of women in situations of armed conflict. Women who headed households following the loss of a family member in conflict were a population of particular concern. Their ability to earn an income was often hampered by limited education, lack of skills and cultural traditions that prevented them from running a business. In addition, owing to their unclear legal status, the wives of missing men frequently found that their rights to property, access to basic services and custody of their children were in jeopardy. ICRC had responded to the needs of such women by providing relief distribution, microeconomic opportunities, psychosocial services and legal support. It also raised awareness of women's needs among authorities and supported the training of Government personnel in forensics and the collection of ante-mortem data in order to determine the fate of missing persons.

10. Women were also affected by the disruption of life-saving health-care services, such as vaccination and maternal care programmes, during times of general insecurity or violence. While ICRC had launched a project to address the problem, the health-care community alone could not address the challenges of ensuring access to health services in situations of armed conflict. States must recognize that violence that disrupted health-care delivery was a serious and widespread humanitarian challenge and devote focused attention to the issue, particularly through raising awareness among their armed forces and other authorities.

11. **Mr. Rohland** (Observer for the International Organization for Migration (IOM)) said that, while IOM recognized the vulnerability of women migrants to exploitation and gender-based violence, it believed that migration could be an empowering experience for women by expanding their livelihood opportunities. In that regard, the principle of safe and legal migration must be upheld in the policies of the States of origin, transit and destination. Concerning the Secretary-General's report on violence against women migrant workers (A/66/212), IOM welcomed the emphasis on the need to protect women migrant workers, in particular domestic workers. The legal and safe migration of such workers required gender-sensitive migration policies and cooperation between States. Concerning the Secretary-General's report on the status of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/66/99), he noted that IOM sought to advance general recommendation No. 26 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women by ensuring that migrant women were identified and supported by IOM projects. Migration policies that integrated a gender perspective helped to address discrimination against migrant women, ensure their rights and protect them from violence, regardless of their legal status.

12. As noted in the Secretary-General's report on rural women (A/66/181), rural women's responsibilities sometimes increased as a result of men migrating. Moreover, rural women wishing to migrate had limited access to information about legal migration opportunities, increasing their vulnerability to smugglers. Migrant women contributed to social and economic development and must therefore be considered in national development strategies.

13. **Ms. Christensen** (Observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)) said that women could be powerful drivers of resilience and development in the face of disasters, such as the current drought facing the Horn of Africa

and the typhoons affecting South-East Asia. Recent reports by IFRC and FAO had drawn attention to women's contributions to preventing hunger and malnutrition and the remarkable increase in food production that could result from investing in women farmers. She called on Member States to take steps in that regard and welcomed the emphasis to be placed on empowering rural women at the 2012 session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

14. IFRC had made the prevention of gender-based violence a priority in its 2011-2020 global strategy. The experience of IFRC national societies had inspired critical recommendations to guide the strategy. First, national budget resources must focus on interpersonal rather than collective violence. Second, both informal and formal education could be used to challenge gender stereotypes and discrimination and change violent behaviours. Third, involvement of men and community leaders was essential to implementation of legislation. Lastly, strategies to deal with violence must be adaptable to the strengths and needs of particular communities. The national societies of IFRC worked together with Governments in order to address violence with a holistic and coordinated approach.

15. **Mr. Motter** (Observer for the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)) said that, although the number of women parliamentarians had been increasing worldwide, at the current rate of progress the target of 30 per cent women's representation in the world's parliaments set in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action would not be reached until 2025. IPU welcomed the proposal for a draft resolution on women and political participation as a step to accelerate the achievement of the target and would value a text that identified specific targets to promote women's involvement in politics.

16. IPU encouraged the analysis and reform of States' legal and political framework as a means to increasing the level of women's participation. It had observed that Governments with more than 30 per cent female representation in their parliaments had a proportional list system for elections; implemented temporary special measures; or used periods of transition as an opportunity to reform discriminatory laws and practices. A State's constitution and its laws governing media, political parties and campaigns were also determining factors for women's election to parliaments.

17. Empowering women to participate in politics depended on their access to mentorship, political networks and funding. The Union promoted electoral processes that facilitated women's access to training, media and financial resources. Another priority was to encourage the development of gender-sensitive processes, such as leadership, rules, working hours and other conditions of work in parliaments.

18. The establishment of UN-Women would no doubt strengthen the United Nations focus on women's political participation. IPU would support and cooperate with such efforts in the years to come.

19. **Ms. Ratsifandrihamanana** (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that, since rural women contributed greatly to their communities and households, their economic empowerment would lead to their social and political advancement and improve the overall well-being of their families. The 2011 FAO *State of Food and Agriculture* report, which focused on women and agriculture, had found that in all developing countries female farmers had smaller plots of land and lower production yields than their male counterparts. That was owing to their lack of financial resources and access to training, which in turn limited their access to new technologies and other investments. Giving women farmers equal access to agricultural inputs and resources could increase their production by 20 to 30 per cent, which would reduce the number of undernourished people in the world by up to 17 per cent. Gender equality in agriculture would also improve health and education outcomes for children, ultimately contributing to long-term economic growth.

20. The FAO report offered recommendations to Governments, donors and development practitioners to close the gender gap, which included: accounting for gender differences in rural development policy; ensuring gender equality for rural women in law and in practice, including holding Government officials accountable; providing information and training to women and girls; and easing time constraints for women through provision of essential public services and improved technologies. The planned focus on empowering rural women at the upcoming session of the Commission on the Status of Women was evidence of Member States' political will to support rural women in becoming equal partners with men in development. FAO stood ready to support Governments in implementing strategies and programmes aimed at achieving that goal.

21. **Ms. Von Lilien** (International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)) said that the links between gender equality and socio-economic development were central to the work of IFAD to increase the food security and incomes of rural people in developing countries. Rural women not only accounted for half of the workforce in many countries; they also acted as caregivers, small business entrepreneurs and investors for rural families and societies. Yet they were often relegated to activities that were less productive and more time consuming and that paid less than those reserved for men. Entrenched gender roles also limited their mobility and access to education. Such inequalities had been found to be one of the reasons for the underperformance of the agricultural sector in many developing countries.

22. It was therefore important to build on complementarities between women and men in agricultural production and the rural economy and to engage men in promoting gender equality. Inclusive approaches, gender-balanced quotas and support for women innovators and community leaders would also help to increase agricultural productivity. IFAD sought to be a model for gender equality in its own practices and was developing a new gender policy to fulfil its commitments in that regard.

23. The Fund had identified priority actions to empower rural women, which included: tackling gender inequality in agricultural value chains; strengthening women's capacity to farm in a more sustainable and productive manner in the face of volatile climatic conditions; supporting women's inclusion in decision-making processes; and improving and increasing the use of sex-disaggregated data. The upcoming session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the timely implementation of the Millennium Development Goals must give greater attention to the role of rural women in development.

24. **Mr. Cassidy** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that ILO had advocated for women's empowerment in the labour sector by promoting international labour standards and the Decent Work Agenda. Investing in women's economic potential was critical to increasing productivity and growth. However, the global economic crisis was undermining progress made towards improving the status of women in the world of work. ILO had found that 47 per cent of women of working age worldwide were not economically active, which translated into wasted talent and loss of productive capacity.

25. Women were increasingly migrating in search of better work opportunities. Many women migrants became domestic workers, which offered them a source of livelihood but little formal protection from exploitation. In that regard, the recent adoption of the ILO Convention Concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers was an important step towards guaranteeing workers in the informal economy the same basic rights as other workers.

26. ILO research and policy guidance initiatives included the 2009 International Labour Conference resolution concerning gender equality at the heart of decent work, which noted that gender-sensitive policies were critical to ensuring that poor women were able to benefit from economic growth and recognized the importance of fostering women's entrepreneurship. Together with the World Health Organization, ILO was also coordinating a Social Protection Floor initiative, which promoted the development of social service schemes in developing countries to ensure basic services for those engaged in informal and casual work, a large percentage of whom were women.

27. The economic crisis had highlighted the need for greater gender equality in the labour market, which reduced a society's vulnerability to economic shocks. Despite advances in anti-discrimination legislation, the crisis had increased discrimination against migrant workers. In addition, women earned 70 per cent to 90 per cent of men's wages, while sexual harassment persisted as a significant problem in the workplace. ILO remained firmly committed to promoting gender equality and decent work for all.

Agenda item 65: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/66/41,* A/66/227, A/66/228, A/66/230, A/66/256 and A/66/257) (*continued*)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (A/66/258) (*continued*)

28. **Mr. Kamau** (Kenya), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that the Secretary-General's reports provided a useful overview of the progress

* To be issued.

made on the implementation of commitments to protect and promote children's rights.

29. In many African countries, progress was very slow. The Group welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal to take an equity-focused approach in order to fast track the attainment of commitments made during the special session and of the Millennium Development Goals. African countries considered the rights, welfare and protection of children to be of paramount importance to the overall agenda of human and social development. They had committed themselves individually and collectively to ensuring the protection, survival and development of children, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

30. A programme of action adopted at the African Union (AU) Summit in 2008 included provisions to review progress every five years and to strengthen the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which was monitoring the programme. In addition, it had been agreed to include children's issues in the African Peer Review Mechanism and to prepare a report on the state of Africa's children every two years. With UNICEF support, the AU had been able to enhance the capacity of the Committee and to issue a report on the state of Africa's children in 2008 and 2010 which showed an emerging trend to mainstream the rights and welfare of children into broader national and regional development frameworks.

31. The challenges facing girls were especially acute, including child and forced marriages, gender-based violence, abuse, exploitation, inadequate access to nutrition services, gender disparities and a lack of opportunities for participation. While some of those challenges were the result of parental inability to provide, others were due to harmful traditional practices. An AU conference held in Addis Ababa in October 2011 on overcoming harmful traditional practices had provided a platform for consultations on methods to combat such practices. The AU had likewise endorsed a draft resolution during the current session on female genital mutilation.

32. Promoting and protecting children's rights required that children should be provided with access to a safe living environment, to a quality basic education, to opportunities to develop individual capacities and to freedom from discrimination and poverty. Measures to foster economic growth and accelerate social development should therefore be encouraged through partnerships between countries, the United Nations and other international organizations.

33. **Mr. Goddard** (Barbados), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the rights of children were paramount to the countries of the region, which continued to develop and implement programmes and policies aimed at the full realization of those rights.

34. Education had long been recognized as both a human right and a human need that allowed children to develop to their fullest potential, and in the majority of the region's countries primary education was universal, compulsory and free. Early childhood education had been given top priority as a means of taking advantage of the developmental opportunity offered by early childhood, and by 2015 at least 30 per cent of children under 2 and 100 per cent of children between 3 and 5 years of age would have access to quality early childhood education.

35. Most children in the region were born healthy and had access to good health services, as evidenced by high immunization and low infant mortality rates. There was also a renewed commitment to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV and AIDS, and some countries had already done so through the provision of free anti-retroviral treatment to HIV-positive mothers. The promotion of healthy lifestyles to overcome factors such as obesity that contributed to non-communicable diseases was likewise a priority.

36. The Secretary-General's report on the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/66/230) painted a grim portrait of the fate of children with disabilities, who were even deprived of their most fundamental right to life. As principal sponsors of the 2011 draft resolution on the rights of the child, which focused on the rights of children with disabilities, the CARICOM countries continued to work to overcome social factors such as ignorance, prejudice and fear which lay at the heart of the discrimination faced by children with disabilities.

37. The majority of the countries of the region were signatories of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and they would continue to develop and implement policies and strategies to realize the rights of children with disabilities.

38. **Mr. Emvula** (Namibia), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that its member States were concerned about the fact that millions of children worldwide continued to live in poverty and were experiencing hunger, disease, abuse and exploitation, as well as limited access to education. They were also concerned about the lack of adequate social and economic safety nets for orphans and vulnerable children. In that respect, they were committed to the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as evident from the introduction of programmes in national development plans and poverty reduction strategies, emphasizing health and education in particular.

39. The region, like many others, was experiencing a high incidence of communicable diseases, which greatly affected children and thwarted the development process. It had adopted a multisectoral HIV and AIDS strategy, to build national and regional capacity for effective monitoring of that scourge. Steady progress had been made within the context of a five-year plan for the operationalization of that strategy.

40. The region had also adopted a 10-year strategic plan of action to address another area of concern: the growth of trafficking in persons, especially women and children. In order to enhance the productive capacity of their people, member States were providing improved education and skills development, and promoting science, technology and entrepreneurship in particular.

41. Most national development plans included provisions for basic and inclusive education as a priority area to ensure sustainable development and poverty reduction. Moreover, the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education had been integrated into many national education plans in the region. SADC Governments' consultations with civil society and the private sector on the issue of education had become institutionalized. Nevertheless, he appealed to the international community to provide additional and adequate resources to help them to meet the goals set out in the plan of action adopted at the special session of the General Assembly on children (A/RES/S-27/2, annex).

42. SADC had sponsored a draft resolution on the girl child, as in previous years, and was committed to keeping the issue on the international agenda until the girl child occupied her equal place in all societies. He hoped the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

43. **Mr. Haji Samsuri** (Malaysia), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that regional cooperation for the survival, development, protection and participation of children in Southeast Asia had been an integral part of ASEAN's efforts to improve the lives of peoples in the region, eradicate the scourges of poverty, hunger and homelessness, and enhance the welfare and well-being of children. The Association's 2001 declaration on commitments for children was a guiding principle for enhancing the protection, development and survival of children in the region, as was its plan of action for children. Both initiatives were in line with the ASEAN Vision 2020 for a socially cohesive and caring region, adopted in 1997. In that respect, the well-being, development, empowerment and participation of women and children must be promoted in the ASEAN community-building process, in line with its Charter.

44. The ASEAN Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children took into consideration the different historical, political, sociocultural, religious and economic contexts in the region and the balance between rights and responsibilities. It aimed to promote the implementation of international, ASEAN and other instruments related to the rights of women and children, and to promote public awareness and education in that regard. It engaged in serious dialogue on the critical issues of gender equality and the rights of children in ASEAN with stakeholders including the Committees on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and on the Rights of the Child, UN-Women and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in order to complement existing protocols. The Commission had been given the mandate to develop policies, programmes and innovative strategies, covering the right to quality education, trafficking in children, adolescent physical and mental health, and children affected by war or armed conflict.

45. A children's forum had been established within ASEAN, institutionalizing children's participation and giving them a regional voice. The first such forum had been held in the Philippines in October 2010, attended by 32 children from 13 to 20 years of age, including seven children with disabilities. That forum served as a bridge for communication between Governments and

children, helping to build a people-oriented ASEAN community.

46. At the international level, all ASEAN member States had ratified and were parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

47. **Ms. Schlyter** (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process countries and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the member States of the European Union were required, under the Lisbon Treaty, to actively promote the rights of the child, while the Union's Charter of Fundamental Rights recognized that children were independent and autonomous rights holders. All European Union member States had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which would continue to guide European policies and actions impacting children's rights. The Union supported universal ratification of the Optional Protocols on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the involvement of children in armed conflict, which were of utmost importance. In that regard, States should withdraw any reservations running counter to the Convention and its Optional Protocols. Also, it welcomed the adoption by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 17/18 of a third optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure.

48. The European Union had become a formal party to an international human rights treaty, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, for the first time in its history, in January 2011. Together with partners from the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, it would be sponsoring a draft resolution addressing both the rights of the child and of persons with disabilities, since children with disabilities tended to suffer multiple forms of discrimination. In February 2011, the Union had adopted an agenda for the rights of the child, which focused on child-friendly justice, protecting children in vulnerable situations and combating violence against children within and outside its borders. That agenda identified Roma children as a vulnerable group of children in the European Union and beyond. A European Union framework for national Roma integration strategies would guide national Roma policies and mobilize funds, with a focus on access to education, jobs, health care and housing.

49. The European Union was committed to eliminating all forms of violence against children, and would continue to implement its guidelines on the rights of the child and on violence against women and girls and combating all forms of discrimination against them. It was particularly concerned about the economic exploitation of children, and remained committed to eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2016, including through the adoption of a number of initiatives to ensure that children who worked did so under conditions appropriate to their age and physical, mental and social development. A comprehensive approach was needed to tackle the root causes of the economic exploitation of children; in that respect, the European Union was endeavouring to strengthen partner countries' systems and capacities for delivering basic services without discrimination, including through universal birth registration, free, compulsory and universal primary education and access to basic health services.

50. The Union also called for the extension of the mandate of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. It reaffirmed its commitment to relevant Security Council resolutions and would continue to work towards implementation of the Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups.

51. To combat the worst crimes committed against children, including child prostitution, human trafficking, and child sex tourism, the Union had adopted a directive on human trafficking, and would also be adopting a directive on child sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and child pornography by the end of 2011. Furthermore, in June 2011, it had adopted a plan of action on gender equality and women's empowerment, which helped to combat gender-based violence and all forms of discrimination against women and girls worldwide. It had provided a grant of nearly 3 million euros to help improve the reproductive health of young people from 10 to 24 years of age, prevent early pregnancies and protect the health of young women and newborn children.

52. **Mr. Errázuriz** (Chile), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that the signing and ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional

Protocols should be a priority as that would significantly help to ensure that all children fully enjoyed their human rights and fundamental freedoms, and hoped that the office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children would receive the support needed to play its important role.

53. The Rio Group would continue to participate in negotiations on the omnibus draft resolution on the rights of the child and hoped that the Committee's deliberations on the rights of children with disabilities would help to make that issue a cross-cutting one on the United Nations agenda, so that States could focus on that group — which was disproportionately at risk of violence, neglect and abuse — and make its needs a priority in their national development policies and programmes. States should fully comply with relevant international conventions and recommendations, eliminate barriers to discrimination against children with disabilities and introduce the concept of "reasonable accommodation" for those children. It was particularly important to put an end to their segregation in schools and to develop an inclusive educational system.

54. The Group condemned the pernicious practice of the enforced disappearance of children, which denied those children their identity. He called on Member States to adopt the necessary measures to prevent the abduction of children and sanction perpetrators, and to work together to search for and identify victims of that practice and return them to their families, in line with relevant international agreements and legal procedures.

55. International cooperation and the promotion of development in all countries was key to enhancing children's participation, and supportive national policies were needed to promote their well-being. Civil society, the private sector and the media all had an important role to play in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, and the policies and actions adopted on issues affecting children must take into account the best interest of the child and incorporate a gender perspective.

56. The Rio Group was deeply concerned about the vulnerability of children who were victims of trafficking, sexual exploitation, rape, abuse, sale of organs, sexual tourism and child pornography, a situation which was exacerbated in the context of poverty, social inequality, discrimination, migration, insecurity and organized crime. It was critical to tackle the underlying causes of those practices, and the Rio Group was committed to fulfilling the objectives of the Rio de Janeiro Declaration and Call for Action to Prevent and Stop Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents.

57. Despite efforts to curb violence against children, that scourge was still widespread. It was particularly important to protect children in special circumstances such as those who travelled unaccompanied, were forced to work, had been given death sentences, or who were victims of trafficking. The Rio Group was committed to working with the United Nations on raising international standards, strengthening and consolidating existing international instruments and mechanisms, fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals related to children and the declaration and plan of action for "A World Fit for Children".

58. **Ms. Horsington** (Australia), speaking on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand, said that while much had been achieved over the past decade towards the promotion and protection of children, many fundamental challenges remained, as millions of children throughout the world continued to live in poverty and lacked adequate food, shelter and access to health and education. The famine in the Horn of Africa, where as many as 15 out of 10,000 under the age of 5 died each day, was a disaster of monumental proportions which demanded the collective resolve of Member States.

59. Homelessness among children severely impacted those children's development and risked placing them on a path to lifelong disadvantage. It was thus welcome news that at its March 2012 session the Human Rights Council would be focusing on the rights of children working or living in the street. Canada, Australia and New Zealand also welcomed the focus on children with disabilities in the draft resolution to be considered by the Committee, and were pleased to have contributed to the discussion on involving youth through dialogue and mutual understanding at the United Nations high-level meeting on youth, and called for continuing that dialogue. Since girls faced particular challenges, as they were at greater risk of being exposed to and encountering various forms of discrimination and violence, Member States were urged to support the proclamation of an international day of the girl child by the General Assembly, especially as evidence had shown that investing in girls yielded better

development results than investing in any other demographic group.

60. Lastly, with regard to the use and abuse of children in armed conflict, the three countries welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 1998 (2011) expanding the listing criteria for the monitoring and reporting mechanism to include recurrent attacks on schools and/or hospitals and against protected persons in relations to schools and/or hospitals as grave violations committed against children in armed conflict, and commended the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

61. **Ms. Maina** (Nigeria) said that her country had made considerable progress towards the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, notably through its accession to all major international instruments on the matter, and development of appropriate national legislation and policies. Its 2003 national act on child rights was based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. That act was already being adopted and implemented by a number of Nigerian States and efforts were ongoing to ensure its implementation throughout the country. It included provisions for a new justice administration mechanism for children, as well as prohibition of female genital mutilation, street vending, early marriage of girls and trafficking of children. Its implementation was being monitored by a committee comprising representatives of the Nigerian Government, United Nations agencies, development partners, civil society and non-governmental organizations, and community-level child protection networks would sensitize caregivers on what constituted abuse, and help to identify abused children and to prosecute offenders.

62. As there were an estimated 17 million orphans and vulnerable children in Nigeria, a five-year national action plan had been adopted to increase their access to health, nutrition and education, and was being reviewed in the light of best practices around the world.

63. Her Government was doing its utmost to prevent internal and cross-border trafficking. A national agency for the prohibition of trafficking in persons, rehabilitated trafficked persons and prosecuted traffickers. The Government had signed an agreement with the International Labour Organization and the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour to set up shelters for the rehabilitation and reintegration of rescued trafficked children with their families.

64. In spite of the steady progress made towards providing equal educational opportunities for boys and girls, girls still made up more than half of the nation's out-of-school children. Various strategies had thus been put in place to enhance the education opportunities of the girl child, including programmes to promote their literacy and enhance their vocational training and skills acquisition, recruitment of more female teachers and grants to parents of girls. A number of Nigerian States had adopted laws to facilitate the school enrolment and retention of girls.

65. Lastly, a children's parliament had been set up at the national and State levels serving as a platform to give Nigerian children a voice in the conduct of their affairs and those of their community and country, helping them to contribute directly to policymaking and implementation, and thus to national development.

66. **Mr. Frick** (Liechtenstein) said that his Government had ratified the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and fully supported the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. As an active member of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict, his Government reiterated its support for Security Council resolution 1998 (2011) on children and armed conflict and welcomed the expansion of the Council's monitoring and reporting mechanism to include attacks on schools and hospitals. It was the responsibility of States to prosecute those responsible for grave violations against children in armed conflicts, and the International Criminal Court played a complementary role when States failed to fulfil that responsibility.

67. In the context of the draft third optional protocol, there should be a complaints procedure for violations of children's rights and an inquiry procedure for grave or systematic violations. However, the opt-out option in the context of inquiries was regrettable. Also, it would have been preferable to have a collective rather than an individual complaints procedure, although fortunately the latter did not place restrictions on who could file a communication on behalf of a child or group of children. Lastly, he welcomed the focus of the

Secretary-General's report on implementing the rights of children with disabilities.

68. *Mr. Zelioli (Italy), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

69. **Mr. Sinhaseni** (Thailand) said that his Government had recently amended a number of laws in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and had withdrawn its reservation to article 7 of the Convention to allow birth registration for all children, regardless of nationality. Its 2003 Child Protection Act and a 2010 act for juveniles and family were examples of the progress made in preventing and responding to violence against children. His Government had achieved Goal 2 of the Millennium Development Goals and provided 15 years of free education for all, from kindergarten to high school, regardless of nationality. Its act for the education of persons with disabilities reaffirmed those persons' right to education at all levels, and special education centres for children with disabilities had been set up in every province to enhance their quality of life and allow them to go to school with other children.

70. Domestic violence, child pornography, child sexual abuse, trafficking in persons and involvement with narcotic drugs required effective law enforcement as well as awareness-raising efforts, particularly in rural areas, and it was crucial to ensure that law enforcement officials were sensitized to issues involving children. A subcommittee had been set up in Thailand to oversee planning and policies to prevent the trafficking in persons linked with child tourism, and crisis centres focusing especially on girls and the prevention of early pregnancy had been set up, as had telephone hotlines and public and private shelters for children who were abused or at risk of abuse.

71. In Thailand, children and youth were encouraged to participate in dedicated councils as a forum for exchange and for their involvement in policymaking processes.

72. Cooperation from all stakeholders — Governments, international organizations, the private sector and civil society — was required to ensure the protection of children. He welcomed efforts being undertaken within the United Nations system to strengthen child protection systems, and to provide technical assistance and assistance with treaty compliance. Mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels, including through the United Nations, must be strengthened to ensure more coordinated, consolidated and effective support, particularly in light of the current economic constraints.

73. **Mr. Rakovski** (Russian Federation) said that the future of the international community depended to a large extent on the level of preparation that children had upon reaching autonomy. His Government supported stronger international cooperation in the promotion and protection of the rights of children, particularly in the context of the ongoing global financial crisis, taking guidance primarily from the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the goals stated in the outcome document of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children, entitled "A World Fit for Children".

74. Ensuring the physical and mental health of children and the fulfilment of their intellectual and creative potential was a social policy priority for his Government and was a component of nearly all national programmes. His Government was rigorous in its compliance with the relevant international legal norms and its reporting obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and was moving towards participating in the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The Russian Federation had recently increased criminal liability for crimes against minors and lengthened prison sentences for sexual crimes against minors. There was rigorous oversight to ensure that convicted paedophiles served out their sentences and the President had recently proposed amendments to the Criminal Code that increased penalties for paedophilia.

75. As a result of rapid technological development, children were absorbing great quantities of information and advertisement starting from an early age, and there were calls by civil society for measures to protect children from violent television and video content. In response, his Government had accepted the responsibility for protecting children and teenagers from harmful content by adopting or amending legislation pertaining to the rights of children, mass media and advertising.

76. Special attention was being paid to meeting the needs of children and teenagers with limited opportunities and those without parental care, preventing child abandonment and supporting foster families. A State commission, which worked closely

with a number of non-governmental organizations, was overseeing the implementation of an inclusive education programme for children with disabilities in the public school system and working to prevent neglect and violation of the rights of minors. The commissioner for the rights of the child had broad oversight powers with regard to the protection of children's rights and the related work of State and non-governmental institutions, notably international adoptions, and had established regional offices throughout the country. Thus, the promotion and protection of the rights of children had been taken up at the highest levels of Government.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.